

ARE YOU READY

“*What do you mean by this question?*” There is a great event before you: its arrival is certain; but it is utterly beyond your power to ascertain at what hour it will arrive. Ten or twenty years may elapse before its arrival—perhaps not as many minutes. Some have expected it long, but it still delays. Millions have put it far off, but it has burst unexpectedly upon them. This is a most momentous event. It will sunder all your relations to the present world: it will break every tie of mortality—strip off every disguise—expose every error and deception—bring out to light your whole character, even to every secret thing—present you before a just and holy Judge, and introduce you to an unchangeable condition of joy or sorrow. This event is DEATH; and the question is, “Are you ready to die?”

“*Who asks this question?*” Your *Maker*. He does it in his *word*. One of the grand objects of that blessed volume is to enable you to give it an affirmative answer. By judgments and by mercies does his holy *providence* press this matter upon you. Your own *rational nature* does the same. When reason and conscience are permitted to speak, they urge attention to this great concern. Dispel from your mind the delusive charms of this world; press your way out of that torrent of cares or pleasures which sweeps every serious thought away; rebuke every other appeal, and let that only be heard which the unblinded reason and the unseared conscience make, and you will perceive that this inquiry is solemnly addressed to you. By your *frailty and mortality* is this question pressed. Nothing can be more

precarious than your hold on life. Your body is the tie that binds you to the earth. How frail a flower. "The wind passeth over it, and it is gone." It is in health and vigor to-day; to-morrow it is lifeless and cold, and full of corruption. "The worm is thy sister and thy mother." Your frailty therefore cries, *Are you ready?* and the voice waxes louder and louder with every wasting hour of your probation. *Eternity* seems uttering the same appeal: as if with a living voice, it presses every human mind with the momentous truth, that beyond the grave man's destiny is irreversibly settled; the righteous are "righteous still," the filthy, "filthy still." And it utters the earnest admonition, "Beware of unpreparedness to die." But there is yet another voice—and, reader, if there be any voice that should drown all the appeals of the cares and pleasures of this world, which should excite the soul's most intense and devout attention, which should penetrate its lowest depths, and arouse its strongest emotions, it should be the voice of *the Redeemer*. "Be ye also ready," is his admonition. No voice breaks upon human ears in so much tenderness and love; for no friendship has man experienced like that shown by the Son of God, and no voice is so suited to inspire solemnity and awe as that of the final Judge.

"*Why ask THIS question?*" Because none can be conceived of so much importance. Because, disturbing men's sinful minds as it does, they are not disposed to press it honestly and earnestly upon themselves. Because an honest, serious, enlightened decision of this question may be of everlasting benefit to your soul. Because, amid the hurry of business or the whirl of pleasure, you may at this hour need something to lead you to consider your character and eternal prospects. Because, if the subject which this question urges upon you is not attended to, the soul will be lost.

"*Why ask ME this question?*" Because it respects interests of yours of infinite value—interests in fearful peril, if you cannot answer this question in the affirmative. Because this question is suited to arouse attention to what *you* may have totally neglected. Because *you* may be the very person of all living who most need such an appeal; being, perhaps, the victim of a false hope, or of fatal error, and borne farther and farther every day from God by the growing power of sin. Because it is of infinite importance that *you* make a correct

decision of this question. And especially, because the next bosom pierced by the dart of death may be *your own*.

“*Who are not ready?*” Common opinion, in a gospel land, sweeps a large circle, and there stand within it the murderer, the thief, the drunkard, the idolater, the profane swearer, the adulterer, the scoffer, the liar, and the hypocrite. But the word of God sweeps a larger circle still, including not only *those*, but *these*: the covetous, the lewd, the lovers of pleasure more than of God, the fraudulent, the unmerciful, the formalist, the prayerless, the worldly—indeed every soul which has not been washed in the blood of Christ, and is not a habitation of the Holy Spirit. Not one of all these can give an affirmative answer to the question now urged. Not one of them is ready to die. Death’s arrival if they understood their own condition, would fill them with inexpressible consternation.

“*If I am ready, what then?*” As this is one of the most important decisions mortal man can make—as it involves interests of infinite value—as a wrong decision would be unspeakably perilous, make it not without the most careful examination. Spread before you the holy Scriptures, and ponder deeply their descriptions of Christian character. Apply the line and plummet to your own heart and life. Rest on no man’s good opinion. Keep in mind the final trial of your case. How solemn, how searching that trial! How momentous the result! If, after all, you can humbly hope you are accepted in Christ, then honor with the warmest zeal, and in every possible manner, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Let all men see that your hope purifies, and your faith works by love. Let them see that your whole character has been cast anew in the mould of the gospel. By every energy you can employ, endeavor to make your fellow-men possessors of a like glorious hope.

“*If I am not ready, what then?*” Then you have already run a most desperate hazard of losing your soul. You could not have said, in any hour of life, the next should not be your last; and as you are now unprepared to die, you have run as many risks of everlasting ruin as you have lived hours. You have stood on the dizzy height of a most frightful precipice. Your feet had well-nigh slipped. Look back: it would seem your heart would grow faint and sick at the dreadful peril to which you have been exposed. Your not

being now ready also implies very great guilt. It implies insensibility to the most powerful and affecting motives; stubborn refusal of a thousand kind and affectionate invitations; contempt of most solemn warnings; reckless indifference to the soul's value. I appeal not to vices and crimes in proof of sin; there is evidence enough without this to prove you stained with crimson guilt. But if you are not ready, there is no work so important, no obligation so pressing, as your immediately seeking the favor of God. Bid the world retire. Its highest and most pressing claims should not impede you for a moment in the great work of getting ready to die.

“*But I am in health, in the fulness of my strength, why press this matter so earnestly upon ME?*” You are just the person to be addressed. If you lay upon a dying bed, life's lamp expiring, and all your powers sinking into ruin—if you had reached such a point unprepared, had crowded this great work into that most unfit hour, there would be scarce the slightest prospect that any appeal would avail.

Once more, the question, *Are you ready?* though now asked in affectionate earnestness, will not be asked by that unrelenting destroyer, DEATH. He asks no man if he is ready. He drives his dart alike through the ready and the reluctant soul. Furnished or unfurnished for the world to come, it must obey the dreadful summons. Reader, by all that is blessed in a death of peace and hope, be entreated to regard the solemn exhortation of your Lord: “*Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.*”